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COLONISATION
OF
SCOTLAND.

BY
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PREFACE.

THE following articles were written during an autumn sojourn in the Scottish Highlands, and appeared in the columns of the *Glasgow Herald*. They are reprinted by request. Mainly descriptive in their nature, they throw some light on an interesting development of our land system, and indicate the line upon which further important developments of a national character may be expected. The policy of land settlement here described has been a pronounced success. A measure is at present before Parliament extending the advantages of the system to the whole of Scotland, where it has been welcomed with enthusiasm. Those who look forward to the extension of small holdings in England will find the Scottish model of infinite value as compared with the costly and transient methods adopted in Ireland. The articles are now republished by the courtesy of the Editor and Proprietors of the *Glasgow Herald*. To the descriptive chapters an Introduction has been added which will put the reader in touch with the legislative aspects of the question.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE elements of the question of land settlement in this country are very simple. There is much uninhabited land well suited for occupation, and there are many men capable and desirous of cultivating it. The problem to be solved, then, is to devise effective means for settling the proper men on suitable land and for keeping them there.

Two leading policies of land settlement are at present being applied by Government action in the United Kingdom. They are the land-purchase scheme, and the non-purchase scheme ; under which latter, new small holdings are created as tenancies and not by land purchase. So far, the schemes of land settlement carried out on these systems have been effected by

voluntary agreement, and not at all by compulsion from the Government. But there is now a demand from Ireland, on the one hand, for compulsory powers of land purchase ; and from Scotland, on the other, for the compulsory creation of small agricultural holdings, as tenancies, at the discretion of a Government Commission.

Which of these systems promises to achieve the most satisfactory results throughout the whole of the United Kingdom, if applied extensively, in the immediate future? It is now possible to answer this question, clearly and decisively, as both of the systems have been put to the test of actual experience in this country. It is in Scotland and Ireland that the experience has been chiefly gained.

In these countries, schemes of land settlement have been carried out by Government action on a large scale. The operations in

Ireland have been conducted practically altogether on the purchase system, which consists in purchasing the land with Government money from one set of proprietors and selling it, on credit, to another. These operations have been characterised much more by lavish expenditure than by success. In Scotland, on the other hand, where the people are more cautious and the Government more frugal, trial has been made of the purchase and the tenancy systems side by side, and the latter has proved the more successful. Under it, the action of Government is confined to assisting the landlords to create new small holdings on their lands, the new small holders becoming tenants under the Crofters' Holdings Act, 1886, which secures them fixity of tenure, fair rents, and compensation for improvements.

The extent to which the national credit has been pledged, and the number of tenants who have purchased their holdings in Ireland under

the operation of all the Irish Acts, since 1869, is briefly summarised in the following table :—

ACT	Number of P'rch's's	Amount of Advances
		£
1. Irish Church Act, 1869	6,057	1,674,841
2. Landlord and Tenant Act, 1870	877	514,536
3. Land Law (Ireland) Act, 1881	731	240,801
4. Land Purchase Acts, 1885, 1887, 1888, & 1889	25,367	9,992,536
5. Land Purchase Acts, 1891, 1896	46,806	13,633,190
6. Irish Land Act, 1903	30,453	12,349,021
Total	110,291	£38,404,925

These figures relate to the period ended in June, 1906. But later statistics carry the totals further. Between June and November some £2,000,000 more was spent, so that, under the operation of all the Irish Land Acts up to November, 1906, £40,000,000 has been expended in order to transfer the ownership of land from existing proprietors to existing tenants, and the payment of £32,000,000 more is pending. The total purchase price of all the land in

Ireland is estimated to be about £154,000,000, so that almost one half of the land of Ireland has already been the subject of a lavish generosity which makes over to Irish landlords a good British security, in exchange for Irish lands, never the most saleable of properties. And this ingenuous liberality of the British taxpayer has gone further. The Irish proprietors have not only received cash in return for their land, but they have done so at prices far in excess of anything that the land would command if sold in the open market, and the Government grants in aid of local taxation in Ireland have been mortgaged in security of the stock raised to pay the landlords these high prices in cash.

On this point the evidence of the Estates Commissioners, the Government officials, whose business it is to administer the Land Act of 1903, is conclusive. They say* :—

“The average rate per acre paid during the

* P. xiv. [Cd. 3,148], 1906.

five years immediately preceding the passing of the Act [*i.e.*, the Land Act, 1903], for holdings sold by landlords direct to tenants, was £8·9 (stock), when no bonus was payable, as against £13·4 (cash), paid under the Act of 1903, exclusive of bonus, which, with the bonus, would realise for the landlord £15 per acre. This figure, compared with the prices previously paid, shows an increase, in the price per acre received by landlords, of 68·5 per cent."

The Commissioners show also* that the number of years' purchase of rental received by landlords on the sale of their estates during the five years preceding the passing of the Land Act of 1903, averaged 18·0; and, they continue, "the average number of years' purchase paid in the case of sales by landlords direct to tenants for holdings, the purchase price of which was advanced in the period

* Pages xiii. and xiv. [Cd. 3,148], 1906.

ended 31st March, 1906, is 22'9 ; which, with the bonus, is equivalent to over 25½ years' purchase, to the vendor, an increase of somewhat over 40 per cent. on prices obtained in the preceding five years, or of 50 per cent. on prices obtained during the two years immediately preceding the passing of the Act."

And this is not all. A free grant of some £12,000,000 is being paid over, under the Land Act of 1903, to the former Irish proprietors. British credit is being pledged prodigally for the benefit of this same class. But the British taxpayer is making all this financial sacrifice for no consideration at all. A freehold interest in the land is purchased by the State from the former proprietor, and made over to the new proprietor, who has full liberty to deal with the land as he pleases as soon as he repays the purchase money to the Government, which he may do at once. He may then sell his holding to any purchaser ; he

may absent himself from his property more consistently than ever was done by any Irish landlord before. He may proceed to amalgamate holdings, or to subdivide them, and, in fact, to deal with them in any way he pleases. There is absolutely no guarantee that, a few years hence, the position of Irish land will not be similar to what it was before the passing of the Act of 1903. The only thing which the land purchase scheme is assured of achieving is the replacement of one set of proprietors by another. Had this been done by pledging private credit only, there would be no complaint; but when public money is poured out, with a prodigal hand, in free gifts and extravagant loans, the demand must be pressed that reasonable precautions should be taken to prevent the recurrence, after a few years, of the very evils which this generous Government assistance was designed, ostensibly, to remove, once and for all. In this respect the purchase

scheme fails completely. Under it there is no guarantee that the evils of land tenure, which it was supposed to remove, will not reassert themselves as vigorously as ever, after the course of a year or two.

The demand for extending the system further by conferring on a Government Department the right of purchasing land by compulsory order, is little more than a provision for compelling the landlord to accept national money, on the generous scale already indicated, in return for his land. It does not solve the problem of placing a larger number of small holders on the soil and keeping them there. The power that is wanted ultimately is not so much to compel the existing landlords to accept a generous distribution of national money as to compel them to accept tenants.

This is the principle on which the Government's Scottish Land Bill—the Small Landholders' (Scotland) Bill—proceeds. The Bill

proposes to establish a Land Commission in Scotland, consisting of five members, charged with the duty of arranging by agreement with the interested parties for the settlement of small tenants on the soil. The Commissioners are to be endowed with power to hear appeals in cases where proprietors refuse to accept tenants ; and if satisfied that the refusal is unreasonable, they may issue a compulsory order requiring the landlord to accept tenants. Land is not to be purchased by the Commissioners, and tenancies only are to be created, but assistance may be given to the proprietors out of Government money, by free gift or by loan, to assist them in converting the land from its old to its new use. The small holder is required to reside on his holding and to cultivate it by his own or his family's labour. Full provision is also made for securing that the small holdings created under the Bill shall be permanent holdings, and ample precautions are taken to

guard against the occurrence of evils in connection with the amalgamation or subdivision of these small holdings. The small landholder is only a tenant of his holding, not a freeholder, and the conditions of his tenure retain him within the jurisdiction of the Land Commission.

These provisions are the outcome mainly of the experience gained by the Scottish Congested Districts Board during some ten years' labour on the work of land settlement in Scotland. This Board, constituted under an Act of 1897, consists of eight experienced Scottish administrators. One of their principal duties is to provide, by purchase of land or otherwise, for the creation of new small holdings. They made trial of the land-purchase policy, and also of that of non-purchase, their procedure under the latter being to give the necessary financial and expert assistance to landlords and to new tenants to enable them to conclude agreements, satisfactory to both, for the creation of new

small holdings. They enjoy no power of creating tenancies by compulsory order.

In the following articles there is a detailed account of various typical settlements established in Scotland on these principles. In articles No. I., II., III., and V., particulars are given of settlements effected on the non-purchase or tenancy system, and article No. IV. contains a description of a settlement successfully effected on the purchase plan.

By extending the tenancy scheme to its logical conclusion and establishing a Government Land Commission for England as well as for Scotland, on the lines indicated in the Small Landholders' (Scotland) Bill, the most effective and comprehensive solution of the question of land settlement throughout the whole of Great Britain will be achieved. Not the least of the merits of this scheme are these three. It is the only practical proposal for land settlement on a large scale in Great Britain

which can be carried out without creating an enormous debt, national or local. A sure and easy means is afforded of securing the continuance of small holdings once they are created—not the least difficult part of the small holdings question. Provision is made for fixing fair rents in a manner to leave the tenant's improvements in the land and buildings unrented and unrated; thus giving him every inducement to improve his holding and his home. The example of the Highlands of Scotland has shown how speedily improvements in housing are made when this last condition obtains. Above all, the scheme is practicable.

November, 1906.

I.—SKYE.

ON a day when the weather is perfect we set out from Portree on the road running westward to the Bay of Uig and the many-pinnacled mountain of the Quiraing. The mists have lifted, the air is sharp and invigorating, and the sky overhead an uninterrupted plane of brilliant blue. There is not a single cloud in sight, and the sky looks as though it had never sent forth an army of clouds to assail the storm-swept hills of the Western Highlands. It is the first dry day after a long spell of rain, and the country around is fresh and green. Though the roads have been, in many cases, the channels of mountain torrents, they have suffered little damage ; there is no clay or soft soil about them, and the fresh, keen breeze speedily sweeps them dry. On the cultivated land the rain has left scarcely any traces. As in other districts of the Highlands, the lightness of the arable soil, with its sandy, granular composition, seems to have been devised on purpose to suit the demands of the climate. The heavy rainfall passes through it almost as easily as water runs through a sieve.

In the bright sunshine of morning we slowly ascend the hill leading out from Portree ; and, as we mount higher, the view continually opens out. Behind us, the smoke from the chimneys of Portree hangs lazily over the town ; and, beyond it, the waters of Loch Portree are sparkling and glittering in the sun. The summits of the

Cullin Hills, serrated like the edge of an old saw, spring into view from over the shoulder of the lower range of hills towards our rear. Nearer at hand are many smaller hills, green almost to their summits. From the edge of the road on which we move there stretch away to the hills rough pasture land, broken by many protruding rocks and covered with the rank vegetation found on undrained mossy lands, but greener in colour and less difficult to traverse, where it is dry, than the dark heather-clad moors of the mainland. It is used for the grazing of sheep, and many of them are seen scattered over its surface.

Here is a shepherd driving his flock along the road, and when we come on him there is much scampering of sheep and barking of dogs while we pass. The excitement is great over the efforts to keep the horses clear of the sheep. All the time the shepherd is unmoved. He is a broad-chested, well-set-up figure of a man, dressed in a grey tweed knickerbocker suit, and he stands patiently, the calmest member of the group. In soft, musical tones he gives the orders to his dogs, in Gaelic, and away they go, careering wildly round the flock of sheep and barking loudly as though their lives depended on it. But the crisis is soon passed: the barking of the dogs is the only sound that follows us, and it becomes continually more and more faint. We are almost alone in the wilderness. With the exception of one or two shepherds with their sheep, an odd horse and cart with driver, there is nothing moving on the road.

The ascent from Portree is gradual for some miles, and we proceed leisurely, rising higher as we advance, and gaining a wider view of the country. The horizon shrinks away before our gaze. Far off on our left, in the Dunvegan country, appear the two flat-topped hills that go by the name of Macleod's Tables. An old tradition has it that the chiefs entertained the clansmen here when the harvest had been gathered in; and the clouds coming down on the mountains provided the tablecloth. But to-day the cloth is not laid; the table is not spread; and there is not a single coil of mist on the mountain tops. The crops are not yet ripe, nor is the harvest gathered, and Macleod remains in the rocky fastness of Dunvegan.

NEW SMALL HOLDINGS.

We now reach the top of the watershed that separates the streams flowing east from those that run to the west. The blue waters of Loch Eyre burst into view, and beyond them appear the darker waters of Loch Snizort. Stretching away before us from the crest of the hill on which we stand to the shores of Loch Eyre is rough, broken pasture land, on which a few sheep and cattle are grazing; but, on our right, along the road for a distance of over a mile, runs a row of cottages in almost a straight line. These are new, some of them being still in the process of building. They have all been constructed on the same model, and in comparison with the other cottages in the neighbourhood they repre-

sent a great and obvious improvement. They are a substantial type of house, each being built of stone and lime, the stone coming from the land in the vicinity; and they contain on the ground floor two large rooms and in the upper storey three bedrooms. Most of the dwellings have two or three storm windows on the upper bedrooms, and this gives the buildings a turreted appearance that breaks the monotony of outline that is often very ugly in townships of small landholders. The cottages stand at a good distance from one another and a considerable way from the high road. Each of them has an area of land around it of a minimum extent of some eight acres, and in various cases of an extent amounting to two, three, or even four times as much. Part of this land is under crop, the intention being that ultimately as much as possible of it will be made arable. There is also a large area of pasture ground possessed by the community in common. It extends to about 3,900 acres, and each tenant of a cottage has the right to place a certain number of cattle and sheep to pasture on it. New roads have been made connecting the houses with the highways, and new fences erected. Altogether the net result has been that there are now located on the spot some nineteen households where formerly there were none, the land in question, both arable and outrun, then forming part of the pasture land attached to one large farm. This creation of small holdings has taken place on the estate of Skerinish, and it has been brought about by the hearty co-operation of the landlord

and the Scottish Congested Districts Board for a common purpose—namely, to secure the settlement on the land of a larger number of people. It is a scheme of mutual help, which reflects as much credit on the landlord as on the Congested Districts Board. The question has not been dealt with in a jealous, carping spirit, but freely and generously on both sides.

FREE MONEY GRANTS BY GOVERNMENT.

The farm of Skerinish, in the parish of Snizort, Isle of Skye, was placed at the disposal of the Congested Districts Board by the proprietor and his son, Major Kenneth L. Macdonald. The land was sub-divided into suitable holdings, and the tenants chosen by the proprietor and his son. There was no interference by the Congested Districts Board in this part of the matter. What the Congested Districts Board did was to provide the financial assistance required for the making of the small holdings and the erection of the dwelling-houses upon them. For some purposes the Congested Districts Board made a free grant of money, and they provided for others by advancing loans. The free grants made amounted altogether to £1,482, and the loans to £886. The sum of £1,482 given as a free grant was made up as follows:—Loss on sheep stock, £759; inspection, surveying, etc., £338; works, fencing, roads, etc., £385—£1,482. The item of £759 lost on the sheep stock arises out of the sheep-farming custom which enables a farmer,

when he quits his lease, to compel the landlord, in terms of the lease to which he himself is a party, to take over the stock on the farm at a valuation figure per sheep, which is determined not only by the market price that is current at the time, but, in addition, by considerations of acclimatisation of the stock and the fact that owing to their having been on the ground for some time the sheep are supposed to have acquired a local value which sheep coming from a strange place would not have. It is an arrangement that has prevented many landowners from breaking up their large farms into small holdings, even when they were anxious to do so ; and it has been one of the difficulties which the aid received from the Congested Districts Board has enabled various landlords to overcome.

It is an instance of that hearty co-operation between landlord and Government for the promotion of the best interests of the nation which is so highly commendable, and the further extension of which is so much desired. In this single instance of the comparatively small farm of Skerinish the loss thus incurred as the difference between valuation price and market value for 1,159 sheep amounted to no less than £759, or more than one-half of the total free grant made by the Congested Districts Board in aiding the proprietor to create small holdings.

The other items of the free grant call for little comment, but as they were instrumental in providing certain new common roads and fences and in paying for

the necessary work of inspection and surveying, they represent a useful and substantial contribution to the total capital expenditure involved in creating the new small holdings.

BUILDING LOANS.

In addition to the free grants, the Government made loans for the building of the new dwelling-houses. These loans are made to the new tenants—the small landholders themselves, and the amounts borrowed in individual cases are generally £50 or £75. In no case in Skerinish have the Congested Districts Board made a loan for buildings exceeding £100, and in some cases the tenants have not asked for the loan or taken advantage of it at all—they have been able to find the necessary money themselves. Altogether, the sum of money advanced on loan amounted to £886, or an average for the nineteen new settlers of £47 per settler. Although the loans have just recently been made, and the houses are, in some cases, still in the process of building, the first instalment of the repayment of the money was fully made as soon as it was due. The process of repayment adopted is one of equal yearly instalments which, continued for fifty years, fully repay the amount of capital originally borrowed and all the interest accruing on it, at a rate of $2\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. per annum. In the case of a sum of £100 advanced on loan by the Congested Districts Board under these conditions, the total yearly payment by the tenant in respect of principal and interest

is £3 14s. 1d. On many of the new holdings the houses are being erected by the tenants themselves. When we were on the ground a number of the new settlers were labouring at the task of building. Although they were not altogether used to the work they were toiling diligently and getting along tolerably well.

AIDING THE LANDLORDS.

The sum total of the action of the Congested Districts Board was thus to place expert advice at the disposal of the landlord, and to give him financial assistance. He had full liberty to select whom he pleased as his new tenants, the Congested Districts Board not interfering in the matter. The only condition imposed by the Board was that the terms of tenancy to which the new tenants should be admitted would be the crofter tenancy of the Crofters' Holdings Act of 1886, under which fixity of tenure is secured to the tenants. The object of the Congested Districts Board in making grants of public money in the matter at all was to secure the creation of a number of permanent small holdings; and this end would obviously be defeated unless reasonable means were taken to secure that the land should not revert to its former condition.

To fail to make such provision would result in the pouring out of the national money on a worthless and useless task; and, accordingly, as the creation of perpetual tenancies under the Crofters Act was the most

effective way of meeting the demands of the situation, the Congested Districts Board made the grant of this form of tenancy by the proprietor a necessary condition for their participation in the scheme. The landlord readily assented, and the result has been that, by the cordial co-operation of proprietor and Congested Districts Board, a number of new settlers have been placed on the soil; while the ownership of it has not been changed, and the former condition of affairs has been altered only in the smallest possible degree. A very obvious merit of this system of land settlement is that it effects no violent revolution in the ownership of the land. It accomplishes a great improvement in the social condition of the smallest landholders with the least possible amount of interference with the existing circumstances of land ownership; and, in various cases, such as that of Skerinish described above, it has been welcomed by the proprietor as the best means of enabling him to overcome the difficulties of breaking up large sheep farms and of ensuring him success in his admirable and patriotic efforts to place a larger number of people in comfortable circumstances on the soil.

In the case in question the actual money cost to the landlord of making the change has been practically nil. The nation has borne the expense of converting the land from its old to its new use. The life of the settlement has only recently begun, the dwelling-houses are still building, and the first year's crops are being forced from a stubborn and reluctant soil. Much of the land around

the dwellings is rough and broken, and will not be fit for the plough until after much labour has been applied in clearing it. But a new city is not built in a day, and the path of pioneers is seldom one that is strewn with roses. None the less, it is no little achievement to make a satisfactory beginning of colonisation and to place on the soil a score of families where there formerly was none.

II.—LEWIS.

THERE is much fascination about Stornoway Bay. It has an excellent stretch of water and a good anchorage. And it has some charms that are all its own. The natural beauties of its situation have not been spoiled by trade and commerce. Along one side of the bay there is a wood of birch and fir trees, rising from the water's edge and running back some distance up a gentle slope. Wild, grey rocks appear in the wood, and the trees seem almost to spring from them. The green of the leaves, the grey of the rocks, and the silvery hues of the birch make a pretty picture when viewed from the sea with the light of the moon falling upon them. But along the other side of the bay the scene is different. A row of cottages extend their homely lines towards the sea, and the red-tiled roofs of herring-curing stations peep up high in the background. At the head of the bay large piers rise steep from the water's edge, and give good accommodation for shipping. Beyond them, on one side, stands the rugged pile of Lewis Castle; and, on the other, the municipal buildings of Stornoway. The country around the town is flat and fertile, and not a single hill is visible.

Down in the bay half-a-dozen war vessels are riding

at anchor; and farther away, at the entrance to the bay, one of them, larger than the others, is busy signalling orders to the ships under her command. There is a constant stream of small boats going and coming between the vessels and the shore, with the result, as we learn later to our cost, that provisions are difficult to obtain in the town. The warships have made almost a clean sweep of the place.

HOUSES FOR FISHERMEN: PROVIDED BY GOVERNMENT.

In entering the harbour at Stornoway, one of the first sights that meets the eye is a group of new cottages standing in the Battery Park. Their light-coloured walls and black roofs render them conspicuous and visible a long way off. They have been erected recently by the Congested Districts Board for the accommodation of Lewis fishermen. The fishermen were resident formerly in crowded townships far away from Stornoway, which is the centre of the herring fishing in Lewis; and the desire of the Congested Districts Board was to relieve the congestion in the area where the men were resident, and at the same time to bring them nearer to the scene of their labours and the market for their produce. This end was achieved by inducing a number of the fishermen to leave the crowded townships in which they dwelt and go into residence in the new houses built at Stornoway. Major Matheson, the

proprietor of Lewis, co-operated with the Board, and the result has been that twenty-nine families of fishermen have been settled in new dwellings on this spot. Each of the families has a house and a plot of ground, the latter extending altogether to a quarter of an acre ; and the ground rent payable yearly by each of the tenants to the proprietor, Major Matheson, is a sum of £1, or at the rate of £4 an acre.

The share of the Congested Districts Board in effecting this result was of much importance. The Board not only bore all the cost of making the necessary enclosures, roads, drains, and the laying of water-pipes to street pumps ; but they also sent their engineer to the place and directed him to confer on the spot with the District Committee and other interested parties, and to draw up the plan of the type of house most suited to meet the demands of the case. This was accordingly done, and a plain and serviceable type of house was speedily agreed upon, with the full approval of the local Health Authority. But the Congested Districts Board did not stop here. Their original intention was to advance loans of £120 to the fishermen to provide for the erection of the dwelling-houses, but on further consideration they thought it advisable to contract directly for the erection of all the houses, instead of leaving it to each tenant to build his own dwelling. This was the course ultimately adopted, and it has proved successful in the result. The houses thus erected by the Congested Districts Board are substantial and commodious cottages, and they are all occupied.

The plots of ground around them are under crop, and in practically every case they are planted with potatoes. Altogether the new settlement is of great advantage to the fishermen directly benefited, and is also a useful addition to the town of Stornoway, to which the new dwellings form a picturesque suburb.

THE PLAN OF THE COTTAGES.

In building the cottages a principal desire was, of course, to secure as cheap a type of dwelling as possible. For this purpose the cottages were built in pairs, so that a partition wall was made to do the service that would otherwise have required the erection of two end walls. There is a front and a back door to each cottage; and every pair of cottages stands at a fair distance from the next pair. Everything about the dwellings is plain and simple. There are no porches on the front doors and no storm windows opening into the rooms on the upper floor; but the essential feature of the cottages none the less is that they are serviceable and well suited for the needs of the tenants. The accommodation consists of a kitchen, 13 feet 6 inches by 14 feet, and a bedroom, 11 feet 9 inches by 14 feet, on the ground floor, and a large attic, 28 feet by 14 feet, above, which can be fitted up by the tenants into two or more bedrooms if they please, or it can be used in such other fashion as they may desire. The roof is of felt laid on sarking and twice tarred. Water-closets have also been provided.

The contract price was £104 per house in the case of those built in pairs, and £110 in three or four cases where, owing to the limitations of space, it was possible only to erect single houses.

PAYMENTS MADE BY THE TENANTS.

The tenants are required to repay to the Congested Districts Board within a period of fifty years the price of the dwelling-houses, with interest calculated at $2\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. per annum. This is the only payment which the tenants are required to make to the Board, and it is the only return which the Board will receive for the money they have spent in making houses, roads, and drains on the property, and in building a large wall to protect the settlement from the sea. It cannot be said that the Board have dealt otherwise than generously with the proprietor and the tenants. The chief desire of the Board has been to settle a number of families in comfortable dwellings, and in this they have succeeded. It is with a certain sense of gratification at the sight of public effort well applied that we conclude our survey of the dwellings, and proceed along the road leading from Stornoway to the Eye Peninsula.

AIGNISH.

The afternoon is dull and the sky clouded. But the day is dry, and here and there are groups of people making the most of it by spreading out the hay on

the fields to dry. Among the toilers a number of women are not the least active.

We pass across stretches of moorland, where the long furrows on the surface of the heather mark the places where the peats have been cut. Men and women are busy carrying the peats from the furrows to the roadside, where they are gathered into stacks to be carted home later in the autumn. In many places near the roadside the peats have been cut through the moss to its lowest base, and having been removed, the spot that once was covered with a black and spongy moss is now a hard and stone-covered tract of land. Passing the scattered townships of Sandwick and Melbost, we cross the narrow isthmus uniting the Eye Peninsula with the mainland, and soon are climbing the long hill at Aignish. On our left, on a pleasant slope that runs down to the Broad Bay, are situated a number of new houses, each of them placed amid land that is bearing good crops. There are 32 of the houses altogether, and they form one of the most successful of the land settlements carried out by the Congested Districts Board.

NEW SMALL HOLDINGS.

Major Matheson, of Lewis, approached the Congested Districts Board with a proposal for the formation of some forty fishermen's holdings on lots to be given from the farm of Aignish. He invited the assistance and co-operation of the Board in the carrying through of

his plan. The Board had the lands examined and reported on, with the result that they and Major Matheson ultimately came to the opinion that the better plan would be to divide the farm of Aignish into thirty-two small crofts. Major Matheson was thoroughly convinced that there was congestion in Lewis, and he was anxious to do something to relieve it. He was willing to benefit from the experience and advice of the Congested Districts Board. The result of this reasonable attitude was that a scheme of co-operation between the Board and the proprietor was speedily effected. The lands in question were surveyed, and it was found that the area available for sub-division consisted of 135 acres of arable, 22 acres of meadow land, 67 acres of moorland, and 5 acres of marshy ground, which would make good arable land when once it was drained. This area was accordingly divided into 32 small crofts, suitable for the homes of men who, though unable to live entirely by their holdings, would find there a home for themselves and their families while they were earning wages as fishermen or in other occupations. It is not the general policy of the Congested Districts Board to assist in the creation of new holdings on so small a scale, their idea being that new holdings should be large enough to provide for the sustenance of the tenant and his family, and a holding of four acres is scarcely large enough for this. But in areas that are very congested the Board are obliged to relax the

strictness of the rule; and to be satisfied in some cases with providing the tenant with ground for the cultivation of potatoes and vegetables, and grazings for a single cow in order to provide milk for the family use. The really essential feature is that the Board have been instrumental in placing on the soil, in this case, no less than thirty-two families, in better circumstances than before, and that the new colony is doing well.

THE DWELLING HOUSES.

The dwelling houses at Aignish were built by the Congested Districts Board on the model already described in connection with the fishermen's dwellings erected in the Battery Park, Stornoway. But at Aignish the houses are all built singly and not in pairs. They have a clean and smart appearance from the outside, and are comfortable within. In comparison with other forms of cottages that are built in the neighbourhood there is little doubt that both in economy and utility, the dwellings erected by the Congested Districts Board at Aignish compare most favourably. From a personal inspection of some of the houses we have no doubt that they present a standard of comfort and utility which cannot be regarded as other than satisfactory, considering the reasonable price at which the houses were built. In constructing the houses the policy of the Board has been to erect a strong and substantial fabric and to leave to the tenant

the task of fitting in the details of the structure in the manner most pleasing to himself. The contract price for each of the cottages was £110, and the accommodation provided consists of two large rooms on the ground floor, and, up above, a loft that is capable of being divided into two or three small bedrooms. It is ample accommodation considering the circumstances of the people and the place in which they live.

An interesting feature of the new houses was the manner of their building. There was a scarcity of good building stone in the neighbourhood of Aignish, and the price of bricks was high. After some deliberation it was decided to build the houses of concrete blocks on the hollow-wall principle. The method adopted was to cast the blocks in wooden moulds, which were filled to within an inch with concrete, composed of 1 of Portland cement, $1\frac{1}{2}$ of sand, and $3\frac{1}{2}$ of gravel or broken stone passing a 1-inch ring. In order to obtain a fair face, the moulds were filled up in the remaining inch with concrete of one of cement to one of sand, and trowelled. The blocks were not used until a week after the time when they were removed from the mould. They were then passed as ready for use, and the building begun. There were two vertical walls six inches thick, with a hollow air space of two inches between them. The walls were tied together with the ordinary galvanised wall-ties used in brickwork, and care was taken to secure that no droppings of mortar should fall into the cavity. The size of the separate blocks was 24 inches long, 6 inches wide, and

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6 inches deep. Internally, the walls of the cottages were plastered; and, while the floor of the kitchen was of concrete, the floor of the bedroom (also on the ground floor) was of wood. The attic, of course, was floored with wood, but no dividing partitions were erected; and while the outside woodwork was painted, the internal woodwork was left unpainted. The intention of the Congested Districts Board was that some opportunity should be given to the tenants to adapt the interior of their cottages to the form which they themselves liked best. The cost of the dwelling-houses is to be repaid by the tenants to the Congested Districts Board in equal annual instalments of principal and interest spread over a period of fifty years. This matter of the dwelling-houses is described in detail, for it is one of the very few instances in Great Britain in which a Department of the Government has engaged actively in the building of cottages. But there is in other parts of Great Britain at the present moment a strong desire that building schemes on similar lines in rural districts might well be carried out by the action of a Department of the central Government.

SELECTING THE TENANTS.

The tenants for the new holdings were chosen by the proprietor, Major Matheson; and the Congested Districts Board made a free grant of money for roads, fences, etc. The rents of the new holdings are fixed by the Crofters Commission, and the tenure under which the lands are

held is that of the Crofters' Holdings Acts. The Congested Districts Board were not required in this case to incur any loss in respect of taking over sheep stock from an outgoing tenant, and the whole settlement was effected in a prompt and economical manner by the hearty co-operation of Major Matheson, the proprietor, on the one hand, and the Congested Districts Board on the other. It was an arrangement reflecting equal credit on both parties. The results of these harmonious efforts are evident to the eye, and where formerly practically no households stood there are now located no less than thirty-two families in very fair circumstances of house accommodation and land tenure. The soil is fully cropped, and the return is good, and altogether there is no doubt that this settlement is highly successful.

EVENING.

With the shades of evening falling low, we retrace our steps towards Stornoway. It has been market day in the town, and the people from the surrounding districts have gathered in. The market is now over, and they are returning home. Some are cheerful, having disposed of their produce at good prices, others dejectedly drive back to their homes the cattle which they have been unable to sell. Here is a gig returning with four buxom housewives, and they are all contented and pleased; they have done well at the market to-day. But here comes a fisherman driving before him, in lifeless fashion, a stirk

that is as spiritless as his master. A single glance is sufficient to reveal the story of the failure of the owner to dispose of the animal in the course of business that day. A young man comes lightly along the road leading a young horse by the head, and the man is glad, and there is the fire of joy in his eye; he has satisfied an ambition cherished for long, and has at last possessed himself of the animal he has ardently desired. It is a scene that is full of a strong human interest.

As we rest in a boat in the Bay of Stornoway that evening we are witnesses of a weird scene. The mail ship which comes from the south once a day is late in arriving, and the people on the pier-head have been expecting her for long. It is rapidly drawing near to eleven o'clock when her lights are sighted at the entrance to the Bay. On she comes through the dark night, a blaze of moving lights, treading her way slowly past the anchored warships; and, as she approaches, a weird sound rises high on the calm evening air. It is the strains of a Gaelic song, poured forth in long, melodious cadence, mournful and sad to an alien ear. There are many voices singing—the voices of women; and in their song there is a subtle and strange fascination. It is the native voice of Lewis speaking in the accents of its own people, and we listen attentively. We lean on the gunwale of our boat and are silent; speaking not a word, in order the better to catch the song. The mail boat approaches, and the singing proceeds in quicker strains. All too soon the ship is moored alongside the pier, and after a final flourish, the

song dies out. The singers disembark and go their separate ways. They are fisher girls returning to their homes after having laboured for some time in the task of packing herrings in East Coast fishing towns.

III.—HARRIS.

SAILING from Stornoway on a morning that is dry but dull, we round Arnish Point and proceed south along the coast of Lewis, bound for Harris. We race along, keeping close to the rock-bound shore, and the air is fresh around us. On our right is the coast of Lewis, and the cliffs rise up sheer and bare from the water's edge. We round the Ranish Point and pass through the Barking Islands, on one of the smallest of which a solitary sheep is grazing, shut off and isolated from the rest of the flock by an arm of the sea. Proceeding up the narrow waters of Loch Luirbost, we come in sight of the township of Luirbost, with its houses grouped together far up on the hillside and the arable land stretching down before them in narrow strips to the water's edge. In many of the narrow patches potatoes have been planted, and the strong green colour of their leaves shows up strikingly against the different shades of yellow of the ripening corn crops. Nearly all the cottages are made of rough grey stone and have thatch on their roofs, and their whole appearance is in perfect harmony with the colour and nature of their surroundings. At a first glance it is, indeed, difficult to distinguish the houses from other objects on the hillside, as the mingling hues of grey and brown of the roughly-shaped and weather-beaten cottages are the same as the colours

of the rocks and the heather around. But here and there appear structures that are glaring and obtrusive, and altogether out of keeping with the spirit of the surroundings. They are houses recently built on the new model. Their walls are well plastered and painted over with whitewash, and the slate on their roofs is of a colour unknown in the native harmonies of the hillside. But for all that they are commodious dwellings, and present a higher standard of comfort than the other and more ancient habitations.

“LAZY-BEDS.”

We sail up Loch Erisort, one of the longest and most typical of Hebridean lochs, and here we see as striking examples of the well-known “lazy-bed” system of cultivation as are to be seen in any part of Scotland. In hollows and crevices of the rocks, in the “pockets,” as they are generally called, there is gathered together as much moss and soil as can be scraped from the surrounding cliffs; and from the soil so gathered and husbanded the crops are diligently forced. It is so strange to see a nook in a bare hillside a bright mass of green when all around is nothing but masses of grey and barren rock, that a person viewing it for the first time can scarce believe the story of the cultivators, and would sometimes contradict it strenuously were it not that the proof of it all is before his eyes. There are the bare rocks and there the patches of gathered soil bearing rich crops of

potatoes. The ground is so steep in some cases that the cultivator has great difficulty in keeping the soil upon it at all ; and his care, when the rain comes down heavy, is not only lest he lose his crops, but in many cases lest he lose the whole of his arable land as well, as it is often in danger of being swept away by the flood. The cultivation of the "lazy-beds" is done by the spade, there being no need for the plough, as the strips of the arable land are small ; but the produce grown upon them is by no means limited to potatoes, and excellent corn crops are gathered in due season. Loch Erisort is interesting on account of its scenery, and even more for the human interests that are demonstrated along its shores.

NEW SMALL HOLDINGS.

Leaving Loch Erisort, we proceed along the coast of Harris and into the Sound of the same name. The Sound of Harris is one of the finest of the many splendid channels on the West Coast of Scotland. It is studded with pretty islands, and in the background the principal Hebridean mountains appear. All too quickly we pass through the Sound and arrive at the sandy bay at Northton at the extreme north-west corner of Harris. Before us is a narrow sandy isthmus connecting a rocky peninsula with the mainland of Harris ; and on the isthmus and peninsula there is located a very successful land settlement, in which, through the co-operation of

the Congested Districts Board and the proprietor, no less than thirty-two households have been set up, where formerly there was only a single farm. It is a case in which overtures for the breaking up of the farm land among small holders were made by the Congested Districts Board to the agents of the proprietor, and were met by the latter, Lord Fincastle, in the most friendly spirit. The first suggestion of the Congested Districts Board had reference to the creation of small holdings on the island of Taransay, but, on Lord Fincastle's suggestion, this proposal was dropped, and the proprietor offered, with the aid of the Congested Districts Board, to create small holdings on his farm at Northton. There was no doubt that the land at Northton was a better subject for the operations of the Board than the soil in the island of Taransay.

The farm of Northton is situated at the south end of Harris, and is distant by road about twenty-two miles from Tarbert, and two miles from Obbe. In the words of the Congested Districts Board, "it is a good subject, and suitable for the occupation of crofters." The land of the new settlement includes a mountainous peninsula, which forms the common pasture land of the township. A neck of land connects the peninsula with the mainland. On this isthmus is located the arable land, and where it meets the mainland, the dwelling-houses of the settlement. When the holdings were being divided out among the tenants, the Congested Districts Board sent their surveyor to make the

necessary division, and after some slight modifications had been made the plan of this division was adopted. The extent of arable land attached to each household is in many cases not large, a common figure in these instances being four acres, but the hill grazing belonging to the settlement is large in extent and good in quality. A peculiarity of the sub-division of the arable land between the tenants is that the whole of a tenant's arable land is not located in one spot. One part of the arable land is much better than the other, and at the suggestion of the Congested Districts Board all the tenants were given a share in the good arable land as well as in the poorer. Thus a tenant has arable land, roughly of two acres in extent, about his house, and has also a strip of other two acres in the better arable area.

We enter the heart of the settlement, where the houses of the tenants are gathered. A road runs through it; and, parallel to the road, and at some distance from it, there is, on each side, a row of houses. These are the dwellings of the new settlers. Some of the houses are small, and are made of rough stones that have not been cemented well together, and have roofs of thatch. But they are not the permanent dwellings of the new settlers, but only accommodation houses erected to serve until such time as the building materials for the new dwellings have been brought together and the skilled labour of the builder is available. In several cases the new dwellings are complete, and are large

and substantial houses, while in other cases the new dwellings are in the process of building. The land is well cropped and the produce good, and altogether there is no doubt that the settlement is satisfactory; for the principal object in view has been accomplished satisfactorily—namely, the permanent settlement on the soil of nearly two score families on a spot where there was formerly practically none.

Though the holdings are small—too small in many respects, and smaller than the Congested Districts Board would desire—they have provided material relief for the congestion existing in many parishes; and had the holdings been made large, the number of people able to take them and to stock them would have been very small. It is found in practice that the cottar and the very poor crofter can seldom proceed at one leap from his very poor holding to a large one. Experience shows the need of holdings of an intermediate size, to serve as a sort of stepping-stone from the poverty-stricken holdings to those of an ample extent.

The financial assistance given to the proprietor by the Congested Districts Board was considerable. Altogether, the Congested Districts Board expended, by way of free grants in aiding in the creation of these small holdings at Northton, no less than £2,960. This sum included an item of £1,722 spent in the making of a road, in aiding in the quarrying of stones from rock in the neighbourhood of the new holdings for building purposes, and in aiding in the erection of

certain fences. The other items of the free grant were a sum of £745, representing the loss on taking over the sheep stock (the reasons explaining this item are given in the letter on Skye), and a sum of £493, including compensation paid to the former tenant, costs of surveying and management, etc. Very little has been advanced by way of loans for buildings; no more, indeed, than £35. The new tenants were, of course, chosen by the proprietor, and the tenure on which they hold is that of the Crofters Acts. It cannot, indeed, be said that the Congested Districts Board have dealt in any niggardly fashion either with the landlord or with the tenants.

After some time we turn from the dwelling-houses and retrace our steps along the isthmus towards the spot where we landed. Before us rises the menacing form of the mountain on the peninsula, and the dark shadows lie thick on its side. On the left hand is the bay in which we disembarked, and on our right there stretches away seawards a plane of yellow sand, level and dry as far as the eye can pierce. Towards its upper end, where a crescent of green grass marks the level to which the tide does not rise, a number of cattle are slowly crossing the bay, walking one after the other, their dark coloured mass showing up like so many spots of black on the yellow ocean of sand. We proceed along the isthmus to a place where there are steep rocks in the water's edge, and there embark. Above us is a high rock, and on its crest are a crowd of boys. There they stand silent and

motionless as we row away, a cluster of ruddy youths, bareheaded and barefooted, but straight and strong of limb and alive with health. They are the sons of the tenants of Northton, the ripened products of a hard and stubborn soil. We pass away seawards with the picture of the fair-haired boys fast receding before our eyes, but not unhopeful that, before many years are over, many of the hills and dales of Scotland that now know nothing but the presence of sheep and deer will be alive and gladdened by the presence of similar groups of children.

BERNERAY.

Berneray is a small island situated between Harris and North Uist, and the scene of one of the most successful land settlements effected by the co-operation of the proprietors and the Congested Districts Board. The proprietors of the island proposed, with the aid of the Congested Districts Board, to subdivide the farm of Borge into a number of small holdings. The farm extended to 1,680 acres, and the number of new households settled on it is twenty-four. But owing to the peculiar nature of the soil it was not practicable to cut the farm up into twenty-four distinct lots—one for each family. The trouble arose in connection with the “machar” land on the farm near the sea. A large portion of this “machar” land is virtually shifting sand dunes, and as the ground changes each successive winter it was considered impracticable to allocate portions of it

to individual tenants ; but, at the same time, in certain parts the dunes have been reclaimed and levelled down through the course of continuous cultivation. There was no difficulty in making division of this reclaimed land, and in also marking off twenty-four small blocks of land beside the dwelling houses, all these strips being suitable for continuous individual occupation ; and this was accordingly done. The remainder of the land is held and worked in common. The unreclaimed " dunes " are held on the " runrig " system, according to which each tenant only holds temporary possession of a particular piece of land ; but each successive season potatoes of good quality are grown, with a liberal application of sea ware in the hollows and on the side of these shifting sand dunes ; and, in their own way, these patches of potatoes are as great a tribute to the skill and industry of the natives of the Hebrides as are the " lazy-beds " on the steep and rocky slopes of Loch Erisort. With the application of some thought and the expenditure of much labour, soil that is commonly ranked as the most barren can be made to yield crops little, if at all, inferior to those gathered from the richest lands.

The financial assistance given by the Congested Districts Board, by way of free grant, in this case amounted to £1,808, of which no less than £1,513 was expended on making a system of roads on Berneray Island, as there were practically no roads or even cart tracks before this time, and the means of communication between the townships was along rough and irregular

footpaths. The remainder of the free grant, £295, was expended on general expenses, such as the cost of surveying, local management, travelling expenses, and the like. People who knew the island in earlier days and who are also acquainted with it now are eloquent in their praise of the transformation that has been effected by the new settlement. In the old days one-half of the island was possessed by an absentee farmer, and the less productive half divided among the small tenants. The condition of the latter was far from comfortable. Their houses were bad, they had no horses or carts, they had no roads, and, of course, they had far too little land. The scene has now been altogether changed, and the whole island is divided among the small tenants. Excellent new houses have been erected, carts and horses have been introduced, and with the opportunities of enriching themselves, offered by the possession of larger holdings, the people have attained a higher standard of ease and comfort, and also of independence and self-reliance, than before. Writing of this settlement some time ago, Lord Dunmore, one of the proprietors of the island, stated that "to sum up the situation in Borge, Berneray, I should say that when we have the dwelling-houses finished, the road completed at both ends, and the slip built at 'Poll-an-oir,' it will be the record crofter township of the West Highlands." There is no doubt at all that this settlement has been eminently satisfactory.

In ascending a hill at Berneray we come on as pretty

a sight as the eye can wish. The slope is covered with a crop of barley, which is fast taking on the ripened hues of autumn ; and, near the summit, at a spot where the yellow of the ripening corn meets the stronger green of the neighbouring grass, there are two heaped masses of splendid blue. They are bluebells—the Scottish bluebells—and they grow all clustered and crowded together, as though they are making a last stand on behalf of the native wild flowers against the tireless industry of man, and are seeking to augment their slender strength by solidarity of number. They cluster together in the hope that they may be spared. We leave them untouched and pass by. From the top of the hill we gaze over the Sound of Harris, lying calm and silent before us. The shades of evening are falling, and the distant hills of Harris are slowly receding into the gathering mist. The islands of Killegray and Ensay, and others of smaller size, appear like so many dark streaks on the ocean, and further to the north the heights of Pabbay carry their black lines deep into the gloom. The glow of the western light becomes gradually more and more faint, and the long shadows come down thick on the Sound. We turn slowly and descend the hill, bidding a reluctant farewell to Harris.

IV.—SUTHERLANDSHIRE.

IN many respects the East of Scotland is very different from the West. The climate, for one thing, is not the same. The prevailing winds on the East, speaking generally, are the cold, but bracing gales that blow across the North Sea, while the shores of the Western Islands are visited by the moisture-laden breezes that come from the Atlantic and are tempered by the Gulf Stream. This difference is reflected vividly in the language of the inhabitants. On the east are the harsher dialects of Fife and Aberdeen; on the shores of the north-western seas and lochs every sentence falls from the tongue in soft, melodious Gaelic. But the charms of the East are not the same as those of the West, and it would be presumptuous indeed to venture to say which were the greater. Not the least of the many pleasures of the East Coast is one that endears it much to the visitor. The rain keeps away for days and weeks, while the sun shines bright on the North Sea, and the waves chase one another in glee across the blue waters of the Moray Firth. The memory of such times lingers long after all is forgotten of the hours spent indoors when the rain was lashing down on the roof, and even the most hardened native would scarcely venture forth on an errand of necessity or mercy. With the river in flood, the prospect even

of fishing has to be abandoned, and there is nothing for it but to remain indoors and pass the time, as well as possible, in sedentary occupation. It is a very different day when we leave Dornoch, the capital of Sutherlandshire, on our way north to Strathnaver. The sun is shining brightly, the blue waters of the Moray Firth are rolling in smoothly on the level shore, and the sands and grass on the links carry their lines of white and green away towards Embo. The town of Dornoch, nestling among its trees, lies silent and dreamy, and the noisy whistle of the railway train as it leaves the station seems like an act of unpardonable desecration.

THE MORAY FIRTH.

We proceed northward through the sandy dunes that lie around Embo and the Little Ferry, and in due course catch our connection with the main line at the railway station which rejoices in the name of The Mound. Our way is along the east coast of Sutherlandshire, one of the pleasantest spots in the country. We pass through Golspie and close to the foot of Ben Bhraggie, which overlooks the town; we linger for some minutes at the pretty village of Brora; and are delayed longer at the town of Helmsdale, which is prominent with its large harbour and its fish-curing yards, once thronged and busy, but now empty and almost deserted since the fortunes of the herring fishing have changed and moved further to the north, especi-

ally to Orkney and Shetland. Thus far on our way we have followed a course that ran along the seashore, but now we strike inland. We bid farewell to the sunny waters of the Moray Firth, and pass into the dark shadows of the Kildonan strath. Our course is along the side of the river Helmsdale, and close to the steep hillside. The river wends before us, tracing its way, in and out, through the flat green land in the middle of the valley. Here and there a clump of birch-wood appears, with a cottage beside it, but there are few inhabitants, and for long stretches the district looks like a wilderness.

THE KILDONAN STRATH.

All the distance from Helmsdale to Kinbrace is a steady ascent, and the train has been snorting and puffing all the way up. We alight at Kinbrace at length, and are soon driving across the moors to the valley of the river Naver. We pass the chain of lochs that feed the Helmsdale river, and admire the splendid mountains arising on every side. But the country is barren of people, and it is with no little joy that we welcome the sight of Strathnaver when it suddenly springs into view. We stand on the hilltop contemplating the scene. Before us stretches the valley of the Naver, broader and more fertile than the Strath of Kildonan behind us. A great stretch of level land lies in its middle, and the river meanders slowly through it. The

hill rises up gently, and on its side is a wood of birch trees. From different parts of the wood columns of pale blue smoke are ascending steadily into the calm, inland air. They rise from the chimneys of cottages situated among the trees. This is the settlement of Syre, recently founded by the Congested Districts Board. A number of small landowners are now settled here—twenty-three households in all—where formerly there was nothing but a single house.

SYRE.

The farm of Syre, in the parish of Farr and the county of Sutherland, was formerly the property of the Duke of Sutherland; but, after negotiations extending over a considerable period, it was purchased by the Congested Districts Board in 1901. The land thus acquired extends to some 12,116 acres, including hill pasture, and embraces a considerable area that was arable before the celebrated Strathnaver clearance took place. At the time of purchase the farm was described by the Congested Districts Board as one of the best class of Sutherland sheep farms. "The strath," it was stated, "is low and well sheltered, and the grazing rich. The slope to the hill is gentle, and the greater portion of the hill grazings is of good mixed quality." The Congested Districts Board were very loath to pay the purchase price demanded by the proprietor; but, at length, after a long period of negotiation, during which there was a danger, more than once, that the efforts to come to an

agreement would be entirely abortive, a settlement was reached, and the lands and shooting rights purchased for the sum of £10,546 10s. Thereafter the land was subdivided into small holdings, and the selection of suitable purchasers completed. This was a task of much difficulty. The idea of the Congested Districts Board was originally to make each of the new holdings of a moderately large size; but it was found in practice that the purchasers preferred smaller holdings, and accordingly the intention of the Board was modified to meet this request. The holdings as first lotted were sixteen in number. They were each of considerable area, and were designed as self-sufficing holdings. But afterwards the land was re-lotted into twenty-nine small holdings, when there was much keener competition for them; and ultimately, after some small alterations were made, the land was divided between twenty-three purchasers, who accepted the conditions imposed by the Board, and duly entered into possession of their estates.

RE-SALE OF LAND.

The most interesting matters in these conditions were the provisions relating to the re-sale of the land to the purchasers. The Congested Districts Board are empowered to purchase land in order to re-sell it, but are not allowed to acquire land to hold it permanently themselves; and, accordingly, a sale price was put on each of the shares and the purchaser undertook to pay this sum to the Board.

This purchase price was arrived at as follows:—The whole of the amount paid by the Congested Districts Board for the land, £10,546 10s., was divided among the purchasers in proportion to the extent and value of their shares, and the figures so obtained constituted the purchase price of each holding. This was the price which the purchaser was required to repay; but it was not necessary that he should come forward provided with the necessary money at the date of entering on his occupation of the soil. The Congested Districts Board very liberally offered him terms which provided for the payment of the purchase price, with interest, by equal instalments payable annually for a period of fifty years. Thus, in the case of one of the holdings, of a purchase price of £604 16s., the Board stated that the sum which the purchaser would be required to pay annually was £22 8s. At the end of fifty years, of course, the payments would cease, and the holding would belong absolutely to the purchaser. But, as a matter of fact, the purchaser is not under the necessity of making so large an annual payment. The shooting rights of the estate were included among the interests in the land purchased by the Congested Districts Board and made over to the purchasers, and the Congested Districts Board made arrangements with a shooting tenant by which a rent of £250 a year was secured for the shooting for a period of five years. This sum was divided among the different purchasers in the same manner as the purchase price, and a portion credited to each. Thus, in the case of the purchaser above referred to,

with the purchase price of his holding at £604 16s., and an annual payment of £22 8s. due to the Congested Districts Board in respect of it, there is an annual sum of £12 3s. 9d. to be set to his credit as his share of the shooting rent. This reduces the net amount payable by the purchaser yearly to a sum of £10 4s. 3d. The shooting on the farm has now been improved, and has been let recently for a larger rent, so that the annual sum that has actually to be paid by the purchaser for his holding has been still further reduced. The tenant also has contracted to erect at his own expense a shooting lodge costing not less than £2,000. The case is an interesting example of the manner in which the sporting and the agricultural interests may be advanced at the same time. In large tracts of Scotland the two interests have been in opposition far too long, to the grievous detriment, certainly, of the agricultural interest. But the experience of Syre shows how the money value of a shooting has been increased by the location of a larger number of people on the soil. It is a very general rule that grouse thrive better on moors that are close to farms than on ground in the heart of a desolate deer forest.

PARTITION OF THE PROPERTY.

A specially interesting feature at Syre is the manner of division of the land between the different purchasers. The general plan is as follows:—Parallel to the river Naver, and at some distance from it, there runs the public road. On a terrace rising on the upper side of the road

stand the dwelling-houses, their arrangement being in a line parallel with the road and the river. A birch wood comes down about the houses, and also runs up the hill-side in their rear, for some distance. Each holding contains a portion of the level land between the house and the river as arable, and also a part of the land that runs to the rear of the house. This latter land is at present pasture outrun; varying, of course, on the different holdings, but averaging, perhaps, some fifteen acres. All this outrun is secured to each purchaser individually, so that he has every inducement to be industrious, and to reclaim this rough but reclaimable land; for by so doing he himself will reap the full benefits of his own industry. This is a factor of much importance in the social life of the rural community. Adequate opportunities are given for the exercise of individualism in a place where very much of the rural life is based on communistic principles. It is, indeed, an effort to combine the benefits of individualism with the advantages of communism, and a curious application of the latter is seen in operation in Syre.

PECULIARITIES IN COMMON GRAZING.

A characteristic feature of land tenure in small holdings in the Highlands of Scotland is the large part played in the local life by the common grazing and all that concerns it. The general arrangement of the matter is that each individual tenant has a small portion of arable land reserved exclusively for himself, and respect-

ing it he has rights against all-comers ; but there is also a large area of rougher pasture land, on which he has the right to place a certain number of sheep and cattle, to graze in common with the sheep and cattle of his neighbours ; and the possession of this common grazing is vested, not in any member of the community, but in their whole number jointly. No man can properly fence off a part from it and claim it as his own exclusive property. The arrangement in general is that every tenant has an equal right to place a certain number of sheep and cattle on this common grazing, the number being arrived at by determining first the number of cattle which the ground can support, and thereafter dividing it by the number of tenants concerned. It is usual to make the division according to the acreage of arable land held by the tenants ; but, in any case, there is a known number of sheep and cattle which any tenant is at liberty to place on the common grazing, and beyond it he has no right to go. In Syre there is a tract of hill grazing at the back of the wood which is subject to this custom, and the purchasers are free to turn their cattle on to it to graze whenever they please, and to take them off again whenever they like.

A CLUB STOCK FARM.

This is strictly in accordance with the usual practice obtaining elsewhere ; but in Syre there is another part of the common grazing, which is managed in a different fashion. It is conducted on the club stock principle, and

is fenced off from the other portion of the common pasture. The stock on this part of the ground is owned by the community jointly. No one sheep on it belongs to any particular purchaser, the whole stock being owned in common, and the profits derived from it being divided among the purchasers individually. The management of this club stock is entrusted to a committee of five persons appointed every three years by the purchasers and chosen from their own number. The committee appoint shepherds to look after the club stock, and they supervise generally the management of it. It is the duty of the committee further to look after the interests of the community generally, and for various purposes the members of the committee represent the whole body of the purchasers. The committee exercise control over the pasture lands on which the purchasers are at liberty to place their cattle and sheep to graze ; and it is their duty also to take any necessary steps to restrain the selfish instincts of purchasers who may endeavour to place on the grazing a larger number of cattle than they are rightly entitled to do. It falls also to the lot of the committee to make arrangements for the management and letting of the shooting interest in the land ; and altogether the committee act on behalf of the members of the community in a variety of ways.

Advances of money were made by the Congested Districts Board to the purchasers for the building of dwelling-houses, the conditions of repayment being similar to those in regard to the purchase price of the holdings, and

comfortable houses have been erected. The Congested Districts Board have also taken steps to secure that the woods shall not be ruthlessly destroyed, and have forbidden the purchasers to cut down trees, with the exception of those which were marked by a skilled forester, who went through the woods and indicated the trees which it would be proper to remove. There is not the slightest doubt that the Congested Districts Board have shown an almost infinite amount of patience and consideration in the long and intricate negotiations with the purchasers which preceded the final stages of agreement.

THE GOVERNMENT GRANTS.

The total expenditure of the Congested Districts Board on this settlement at Syre was large. Of money to be repaid by the purchasers there was advanced no less than £15,026 13s. 3d., £10,546 10s. of this sum being the purchase price of the land and £4,480 3s. 3d. the advances made to aid in the erection of dwelling houses. But a portion of this loan money has been repaid—namely, £1,534 10s. 1d.—so that the sum due by the purchasers to the Congested Districts Board at March 31, 1906, was £13,492 3s. 2d. In addition, free grants have been made to the extent of £3,438, this expenditure having been incurred as follows :—

Loss on sheep stock	£1,826
General expenses, surveying, management, legal charges, etc.	884
Works—fencing, river embanking, etc.	728
Total	<u>£3,438</u>

Thus, adding together the expenditure to be repaid to the Board and the free grants made by them, a total of £18,465 results; and when divided by the number of households placed on the soil—namely, twenty-three—the sum of £803 is obtained. Thus, in order to settle a family on the land at Syre, the Government were involved in an average cost of over £800, and there are other charges which are not included in this figure, such as the labour and time of the Congested Districts Board and its officials, who were engaged for long on all sorts of detailed work relating to the management of Syre; and, indeed, they are not free from this work yet, nor will they escape from it until the purchasers have completely paid the total sum required for the purchase of their holdings. This is the great objection to the creation by Government of this class of holding. The Congested Districts Board is involved not only in the expenditure of a large sum of money, but it is mixed up in endless details of land and stock management, which are not properly subjects in which it should mix at all. It is not desirable to have Government Departments engaged actively in spheres of business that should properly be left to private individuals. It is enough for the Government to determine the policy that shall be observed in relation to small holdings, and thereafter to leave it to the landlords and tenants to carry it out. In this way the benefits of private management and of public control can best be secured.

But the holdings at Syre are doing well, and although

a few purchasers have fallen out, no difficulty has been experienced in finding others to take their place. Indeed, there is a great rush of applicants as soon as it rumoured that a vacancy is likely to occur, and there is no doubt at all that the efforts of the Congested Districts Board have been highly successful, and that, in this instance also, they have achieved the object which they had in view—namely, the settlement of a number of comfortable households on soil that was formerly supporting practically none.

V.—UIST.

ON a dull morning we set out from the town of Lochmaddy and follow the road running westward across the island of North Uist. The houses of Lochmaddy are speedily left behind, and we pass rapidly across long stretches of moorland that are traversed in every direction by inland lakes and salt-water lochs that penetrate the mainland from the ocean. The water is calm and land-locked, and the only sign that it comes from the sea is the mass of brown and green sea-weed that clings to the rocks along its narrow shores. For a long way the road is utterly deserted, and there is not a person in sight. We have almost ceased to expect to see people when two women come into view bearing large bundles on their backs. A third is some distance behind; and she, more lucky than her friends, has been relieved of her load. She walks beside a cart that is loaded high with peats, and perched on the top of the peats rests her large sack of wool. These are women engaged on the preparation of the native tweed cloths, for which the Outer Islands are so justly famed. For the remainder of the way the country is like a desert. Heather and long rank grass cover the land, and the road traces its course across it like a narrow band of a light grey colour lying on a broad background of dark green. But soon there is an end of the wilderness, and there, stretching before us, is the

Sound of Monach, a limb of the broad Atlantic. The tide is far out; and a long stretch of flat yellow sand, bare and dry, extends away towards the small islands that rise like spots of green on a sheet of sand and water. The road runs parallel to the seashore; and down by the sea is a long string of houses with strips of cultivated land about them. Some of the houses are newly built, and the whole scene wears an aspect of peacefulness and content.

Bidding farewell to the yellow sands of Monach's Sound, we strike inland across the Island of Uist towards its northern shore. We pass out of sight of lochs and lakes altogether, and traverse a district of rich, grassy pasture land, which stretches away in long, rolling lines to the neighbouring hills. Herds of Highland cattle are grazing on the soil. They are excellent animals; and, indeed, the fame of the Uist cattle is well known among the dwellers in the western islands. Having traversed the full length of this pastoral glen, we reach the northern seashore. The Island of Valloy lies green before us, and between it and the shore is a long plane of dry yellow sand, covered with ripples like the surface of the sea when a gentle breeze is blowing; but the ripples are firm and hard, and have been fashioned by the motion of the sea-waves. Far away are two black spots in steady motion; the tide is out, the sands are dry, and two men are crossing from the island to Uist. Proceeding along the shore for a short distance towards the north we arrive in the thriving township of Sollas.

One of the most successful of recent Scottish land settlements has been effected here by the hearty co-operation of the Congested Districts Board and the proprietor of the island, Sir Arthur Campbell Orde. There is an appearance of ease and comfort about the new settlement that is not always found in townships of small landholders in the Western Highlands.

SOLLAS SETTLEMENT.

This was the first land transaction of the Board. The story of the negotiations preceding the creation of the new holdings is short and interesting. Sir Arthur Campbell Orde was anxious to sub-divide his farms of Sollas and Grenitote among small tenants, with a view to relieving the congestion prevailing in some of the townships on his estate. He was sure he could find tenants for the new holdings, provided the Congested Districts Board would make advances of money to assist in erecting buildings and in making accommodation roads. In return for such assistance the proprietor was prepared to proceed with the creation of the new holdings, and to give to their occupants the crofter tenure under the Crofters' Holdings Act of 1886. On such conditions the Congested Districts Board have always been willing to render aid, and their principal difficulty has generally been to discover proprietors who are prepared to offer such terms. But Sir Arthur Campbell Orde is one of the Highland proprietors who have shown a genuine desire

to further the creation of small holdings on his estate. If there were many other landowners like him there would be little need of the Small Landholders' (Scotland) Bill ; and, indeed, little would be heard of the land question at all. Considered from this point of view, the object of the Small Landholders' (Scotland) Bill is little more than an effort to bring the worst of proprietors up to the level of the best. The idea is to make it known to the least responsible landowners that they will not be allowed to continue indefinitely a policy of depopulating the country. But, as regards the good proprietors—and these are neither few in number nor without influence—the compulsory part of the Bill will have no operation.

THIRTY-TWO HOLDINGS.

Regarding Sollas and Grenitote an agreement was speedily arrived at, between Sir Arthur Orde and the Congested Districts Board, with the result that thirty-two new households were settled on the soil and the congestion in the island materially relieved. The dwelling-houses and outhouses are good and comfortable ; the stock and holdings are of high quality, and very good crops are taken from the arable land. Much of the ground that was not arable formerly has been ploughed by the new tenants, and, after a year or two, very excellent crops have been gathered from it. The tenants have good horses and carts, and find sufficient employment for them. On the fine autumn day when we inspect the

settlement most of the tenants are busy carting their peats home from the hills. The long rumble of the heavily-laden carts as they pass over the rough road is the loudest sound that falls on the ear; and now and again there goes up a shout from the carters as they lead their horses along the narrow track that passes from the main road to the dwelling-houses. But otherwise there is silence, and a deep agricultural peace.

Altogether this settlement is a very satisfactory one. At Sollas the holdings are comparatively large, and are rented at £10 each yearly. The tenants have a considerable stretch of land, and are not in any way congested or hampered by being thrown too closely together. At Grenitote the holdings are somewhat smaller, and the yearly rent is £5 each; but here also there is a considerable measure of ease and comfort, and the settlement certainly marks a considerable improvement in the material condition of the great majority of the tenants. No fewer than twenty-five of the new tenants were formerly landless cottars, and the full significance of this change from cottar to comfortable crofter will be adequately realised by those who know the Western Islands. For the information of those who have not this knowledge, it is sufficient to say that the transformation represents a very substantial improvement in the comforts of life.

FINANCE.

The cost to the Congested Districts Board in facilitating the creation of these holdings at Sollas has been £983 of free grants and £1,310 of loans advanced to the tenants for housebuilding, but to be repaid, and of which, indeed, £354 has already been repaid. This loan of £1,310 has been made to the tenants on the usual conditions—namely, that it shall be repaid to the Congested Districts Board with interest in a period of fifty years, the tenant making the repayments by equal portions half-yearly. The £983 of free grants was made up of the usual items: £845 was expended on roads and fences, and £138 represented general expenses—namely, the cost of surveying, legal charges, travelling expenses, and the like. In all there was provided by the Government to aid in the creation of these small holdings the £983 of free grants and the £1,310 advanced by loan, in total amounting to £2,293; and dividing this sum by the number of households settled on the soil, namely 32, it will be found that the average expenditure per household is £71. In the case of Syre, described in the previous article, where the system of purchasing the land by the Government was applied, the corresponding figure was £800; and leaving out of account, in both cases, the moneys advanced to the tenants by way of loans, which it may be assumed will be wholly repaid, it is found that the average amount of free grants made by the Government for each house-

hold at Sollas and Grenitote was £31, and in the case of Syre was no less than £149. As the two instances quoted are thoroughly typical of the two principal methods of settling people on the soil of Scotland, it is seen that the system of land purchase is certainly not the more economical, and it is also evident that it calls for a much larger outlay of Government money in the first instance. In the case of Sollas and Grenitote there was a minimum amount of interference on the part of the Government, and all their negotiations were conducted with the proprietor and were concluded with great expedition.

The figures are available also in this case, showing the rents that were paid for the farms before the subdivision into small holdings was made, and also the rents that are paid by the new tenants. The farms of Sollas and Grenitote (they are adjacent farms) were rented at £120 and £110 respectively. The farm of Sollas was sub-divided originally into twelve holdings, each of which was rented at £10 a-year; but later three of these holdings were united in one, in order the better to utilise the former farm-house and steading. The rental for the small holdings at Sollas is thus £120 a-year, or the same as the former rental of the farm. The case is similar as regards Grenitote. The subdivision here was into twenty-two holdings rented at £5 each a-year, or a total rental of the farm of £110, which is the same as the former rent. It was agreed, in addition, that there should be no revision

of the rents during the first seven years of the new tenancies.

Leaving the level planes of Grenitote, we follow the road that runs eastwards to Loch Maddy. The sun shines bright, and the air is warm and close. Overhead, long streaks of cloud, ribbon-like in form, are slowly weaving fantastic figures. Down by the sea the level sand winds along the margin of the bay, and in the distance the islands of Boreray and Berneray rise from the ocean enveloped in the slumberous haze of the warm afternoon. Passing a little inland from the silver strands of Oronsay, we are once again in the land of heather. Around us lies the dark-coloured heath; and here and there in its midst is an oasis of green, a grass-covered knoll, on which the fairies are said to dance at midnight when the moon is full. Lakes of fresh water lie in the hollows of the hills, and their surface is decked with the flowers and leaves of water-lilies. We come again, in course of time, to the numberless lochs and channels, through which the ocean ebbs and flows. Here is a small, rocky peninsula rising from the water. On its outer extremity, where the rock comes up sheer from the sea, a small dwelling-house is situated; the walls of the house, which face the sea on three sides, spring from the edge of the rock, and are almost washed by the daily tides. The remaining part of the peninsula is green with potato plants; and the white walls of the house and the strong green of the crops make a pretty picture when set amidst the dull grey rocks and the dark blue waters of the sea. By the

dwellers on the rocky eyrie the music of the storms and the mysteries of the floating mists that haunt the outer islands of the wild Hebrides are reckoned among the most familiar things.

VI.—CONCLUSIONS.

IT is now time to look around, and survey the field as a whole, and ask how far the movement of colonisation has had success, and what are the principal lessons taught by it. At a period like the present, when there is much discussion of the question of small holdings and a liberal expression of opinion founded on abstract considerations regarding it, it is useful to appeal from theories to facts, and to scrutinise the actual achievements of those who have been toiling steadily, without noise or fuss, during the last ten years in the practical work of creating small holdings. The conclusions to be drawn from their labours may not possess the simple symmetry of many irresponsible schemes that are now put forward, for they are not the productions of dreaming doctrinaires or of literary pedants, but are nothing more or less than the results of actual experience.

There is no doubt that something can be done by the direct action of Government to settle people on the soil. The experiment has been made by one department in the Scottish administration, and one only—namely, the Congested Districts Board, and has had a substantial measure of success. Compared with the financial resources placed at the disposal of corresponding bodies in Ireland, the national moneys granted the

Scottish Congested Districts Board are almost infinitesimal, and the land operations of the Board consequently have been small in proportion ; but, none the less, the Scottish Congested Districts Board have aided in the formation of 437 holdings in cases where no purchase of land was made by them, and they have also created many small holdings on land which they purchased from the proprietors in order to re-sell to small holders. Two hundred and thirty settlers of this latter class are now purchasing their holdings from the Congested Districts Board on the instalment principle, and the number will be considerably increased when the negotiations now in progress are completed with the small holders for the re-sale of the large estate of Kilmuir, in the Island of Skye, acquired some time ago by the Congested Districts Board. And the success of these operations is not to be judged solely by the number of new holdings created. For the first time for generations a beginning has been made of a systematic effort to place rural settlers on the soil, and the first steps in such a policy are always tentative and proverbially difficult. But the Congested Districts Board have done well, and not the least useful result of their labours is that experience has been gained which is rich in suggestions for the lines along which the future policy of the nation in regard to the creation of small holdings may best be developed.

C.D.B. POLICY.

Of the two main lines of policy pursued by the Congested Districts Board in the creation of these small holdings the comparative merits are clear enough. In the first place, there is the land purchase scheme, described in detail in the case of the settlement at Syre, and applied successfully also at Glendale in Skye, and in Barra. The peculiar benefits of this scheme are obvious enough. The full ownership of the land is transferred from the old proprietors to the new small holders ; so that the latter, having the complete rights of ownership, are under every inducement to labour diligently, and to make the best they possibly can of their possession. The fruits of their industry will certainly be secured to themselves, though scarcely more surely than under the alternative plan. The disadvantages of the system are equally obvious. The intervention of the Government is required in a double capacity, as purchaser of the estate from the original proprietor, and again as the seller of it to the new small holders ; and it is proverbial that Government Departments, however ably managed, are seldom in a position to be very strong buyers on the one hand or very strong sellers on the other. A common assumption with a large number of proprietors is that the Government should pay more than other purchasers for any lands they wish ; and it is equally commonly assumed by many small holders that the Government should, as a matter of course, sell them lands on terms altogether more liberal than they would ever think of asking from a private seller.

And also, speaking generally, a Government Department is not well equipped for engaging in the details of land purchase and sale and of land management. These are matters which are better left to be settled by the proprietor and tenant between themselves. In the case of the large estate of Kilmuir in Skye, for example, there has been ample demonstration of the endless petty difficulties that very naturally arise between the seller and the prospective purchasers, when it is known that the seller is a Government Department. The sphere of the Government is really that of determining the policy which it is most expedient to adopt regarding land tenure, and thereafter to leave it, as far as possible, to proprietors and tenants to carry out.

On the second of the two main lines of policy adopted by the Congested Districts Board in creating small holdings the difficulties arising from this large intervention by Government are altogether avoided. The land is neither purchased nor re-sold by the State at all, the *rôle* assumed by the Government being a sort of judicial one—namely, that of assisting proprietor and tenant to come to terms of agreement. The Congested Districts Board gives expert advice to both parties, advances loans for the building of dwelling houses, and goes so far as actually to make free grants of money, in substantial sums, for the making of roads, fences, and the like. Very successful settlements have been effected on this system at Aignish in Lewis, at Northton in Harris, at Sollas and Grenitote in Uist, at Dunbeath in Caithness, and else-

where, and a detailed description of several of these has been given. In this case the small holders are not proprietors at all, but are tenants, in most cases tenants under the Crofters' Holdings Act of 1886, which secures them fixity of tenure, fair rents, and compensation for improvements when they relinquish their holdings. The question, then, arising for answer is this—Which of the two methods has experience shown to be the more expedient and just for adoption, regarding Scotland as a whole?

FINANCIAL ASPECT.

The facts of the case from the financial point of view are quite clear. The end in view being the settlement of families on the soil, the better method is that which, dealing effectively with the situation and justly with all the parties concerned, is at the same time the cheaper and simpler for the Government to apply. And here the advantages are altogether in favour of the tenancy scheme, as the following figures show. In the case of Syre, for example, where the land-purchase system was applied, the cost to the Government of settling twenty-three households on the soil was £3,438 of free grants and £15,027 of loan money, the latter to be repaid by the small holders, or, on the average, £150 of free grants, and £653 of loan money per household; or, in all, an outlay of £803 was required in order to settle one family on the soil. The nearest settlement to this, in the same part of Scotland,

is one at Dunbeath, in the neighbouring county of Caithness, and here the tenancy scheme was applied with the result that the cost of settling thirty-nine families on the soil was £395 of free grants, and £500 of loan moneys, the latter sum to be repaid as before by the small holders; or an average expenditure of £10 per household by way of free grants and £13 per household by way of loan, or £23 in all. The meaning of this is that the result effected in each case, namely, the settlement of one household on the soil, is accomplished in the one case at a national expenditure of £803, and in the other at a cost of £23. In the case of Sollas and Grenitote in Uist, where the tenancy scheme was also applied, the cost of settling thirty-two households on the soil was £983 of free grants and £1,310 of loan moneys, the latter to be repaid as before, or an average of £30 per household by way of free grant and £41 per household by way of loan, or £71 in all. In the neighbouring island of Barra, under the land-purchase scheme, the cost of settling fifty-eight households (some of them of very small size and intended for fishermen) was £5,846 of free grants and £5,900 of loan moneys, or an average per household of £101 of free grants and £102 of loan money, or £203 in all. The financial advantages of the tenancy over the purchase scheme are well demonstrated by these figures.

ADVANTAGES OF TENANCY.

And there are other advantages in the tenancy scheme. It involves no interference with the existing condition of land ownership. The old proprietors are not displaced nor a large body of new proprietors brought in. The purchase scheme, on the other hand, if largely applied, would accomplish a complete revolution in the ownership of the land, but the tenancy scheme proceeds along less drastic and more conservative lines. It is based on no extravagant ideas, and is directed towards no ambitious ends. All it seeks to accomplish is the settlement on the soil in comfortable circumstances, of a large number of families, and its object is to do this by interfering as little as possible with the former relations existing between proprietor and tenant. It is in the light of this experience, and along the lines foreshadowed by these results, that the policy of the Government as displayed in the Small Landholders (Scotland) Bill proceeds. The main purpose of the bill is to provide for the further extension of the tenancy system, and to do this, if necessary, by compulsion. So far the best proprietors in the Highlands have participated actively and freely in the creation of small holdings on this system, and have not been losers in a pecuniary sense by so doing, and it is only to provide against emergencies, and in the last resort, when dealing with the worst of them that compulsory powers are required.

Regarding the question of the size of new holdings, the experience of the Congested Districts Board is very useful. A common criticism of all small holdings is that they are altogether useless unless they are large enough to provide the full means of sustenance for the labourer and his family. The Congested Districts Board had something of this idea at the beginning of their career. But experience has shown that the cottars (of whom there are so many in Lewis) or the very poor crofters or the agricultural labourers cannot pass at a leap from their very small holdings to others of substantial size. They simply do not possess the stock and capital needed to make the large holding pay, and the best they can do, as a first step, is to stock and work a holding of an intermediate size. Thereafter they may attain to something better. Thus, although the ideal in the cases described is to have small holdings of from 12 to 20 acres of arable land and a large outrun of hill or common pasture land, there must be provided comfortable holdings of a smaller size, in the first instance, in order to enable the poorer men, and they are not few, to rise by degrees in the social and agricultural scale. The tenant with no capital and no more stock, perhaps, than a single cow, can begin with a very small holding; and then, as he gradually acquires stock and capital, he should have the opportunity of rising, by his own labours and by graduated steps, to holdings that are larger. What is wanted, above all, is to offer a career to ambitious youth and age in agricultural employment in rural localities as ample as is now pre-

sented by commercial employment in great cities. The field of labour is as large in the one case as in the other ; but so far it has been much better opened up and developed in the case of urban employment. It is to redress the balance of this social wrong and to remove the unnatural barriers to a progressive career in rural areas that there is now a call.

A HOME OF STRONG MEN.

There are men who have dwelt under Indian skies and gazed on the luxuriant growth of the richest tropical forests of Africa and Asia, and when they return to the cold, wind-swept mountains and valleys of Scotland, and see the people living on a soil that yields its produce only to hard and unremitting labour, they sometimes shake their heads and mutter sadly that our island is no place for people to live on. They go back to the richest plains of India and rear their families in Oriental luxury in the valley of the Ganges and the hills at Simla. But after a generation or two the family fibre grows weak, and all the characteristics of a vigorous Northern race are lost. In the meantime the soil of Scotland is sending forth generation after generation of men as strong as of yore, men who carry the renown of their native land to the ends of the earth. The only nursery of the Scottish people is in Scotland, and the permanence of the race as one of the greatest forces in modern Europe depends on the maintenance of the number of its sons—on the hardy

Islesmen from the west and the stern and unbending Lowlander from the south. The men, and the only men, who will uphold the glory and the honour of the Scottish people in ages to come are the men who have been reared within the limits of "Caledonia, stern and wild." The towns of Scotland are thriving fast, and much is being done to improve their condition. Between the best interests of the towns and the best interests of the rural districts there is everything in common, and a large increase in the rural population would augment the agricultural produce of the country, would largely extend the home market for the trade and commerce of the cities, and would provide the necessary supply of vigorous, hardy Scots, who go forth and maintain the credit of their race in the Colonies and the islands of the seas. To accomplish this end is the task before our statesmen.

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